
Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

September 11, 2012

To: Sheriff Dave Phalen

From: Lt Tim Voris

Subject: Complaint

Filed by Christopher Palmer
Marietta Rd
Lancaster Ohio
740-407-6253

Deputy Involved: James Hughes

Sir,

On September 11, 2012 Lt. Marc Churchill and Myself met with Christopher Palmer about a complaint. Christopher stated he went to his friend Kelly Cumbo home yesterday and saw an individual known as Deputy Jim Hayes. He said he was visiting Karlee Cumbo who recently was just released from the county jail and is the sister of his friend. He said he heard Deputy Hayes make a statement about him keeping his mouth shut or he's got something coming. Christopher is fearful of his safety because Deputy Hughes is a law enforcement officer.

Christopher Palmer

Christopher said while at the Cumbo residence he met James Hughes at the home whom didn't seem to like the fact that he was there. Christopher said he was with Kelly Cumbo his friend bringing in groceries. Christopher said that Deputy James and Karlee left the house and returned later that night and he found both of them engaged in having sex on the couch in the house. Christopher said he poked in his head in the room and didn't think they saw him but he didn't think it was right some of the things Deputy Hughes was trying to do. Supposedly later this evening Deputy Hughes made a statement that "That if that if he says anything he's got something coming" meaning if Christopher says anything about his relationship with Karlee

Christopher said Deputy James Hughes and Karlee began seeing each other in July when she was incarcerated at the Fairfield County Jail. Apparently Karlee was treated for a spider bite and had to be treated at the Fairfield Medical Hospital for a couple days for surgery. While there Deputy Hughes agreed to work a lot of over time so he could spend time with her at the hospital. Christopher said Deputy Hughes has offered to take her to Columbus to go out drinking cause it is out of the county and given her money \$100.00 dollars from time to time he thought to have sex. He said Karlee has told him Deputy Hughes has given cigarettes to her to take back in the dorms before.

When talking to Christopher he stated he was afraid of Hughes because he carries a gun and that didn't know what to do so he called to report the information. A taped statement was taken.

ALLEGATION 1

Deputy James Hughes engaged in a relationship with a former inmate from the Fairfield County Jail. In violation of Standard operating procedures 2.01

ALLEGATION 2

Deputy James Hughes while at a residence made a threatening statement to Christopher Palmer that if he says anything he would get what's coming to him. Violation of department policies and procedures 1.03

ALLEGATION 3

Deputy James Hughes provided contraband into the Fairfield County Jail while working as deputy for the Sheriff's Office. Violation of the Jail Standard operating procedures.

ALLEGATION 4

Deputy Hughes violated policies and procedures of the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

INTERVIEWS

Kari M. Cumbo

On September 12, 2012 I met with Karlee M. Cumbo at her home. I explained the purpose of my interview and she stated she was arrested for possession of Heroin in July 2012 and served her sentence in the Fairfield County Jail. During that time she while as an inmate in the Jail she was treated at Lancaster Hospital and Deputy Hughes guarded her for three days during that time. She said they became friends and talked about her family and his family and her addiction. She stated she was later released and was vising some friends one day at the MSMJ and ran into him and gave him her phone number and said to call her some time so they could hang out sometime. While at her brothers home Kelli, Christopher Palmer was there during this time. Kelli said that she didn't hear or see Deputy Hughes threatened Christopher Palmer. Kelli said she did not have a sexual relationship with Deputy Hughes. A taped statement was taken.

Dep. James Hughes

On September 12, 2012 at 18:22 p.m. Lt Churchill and Myself met with Deputy James Hughes at the Sheriff's Office. He was explained his garrity rights and asked if he knew Karlee Cumbo. He said he knew her from guarding her at the Lancaster Hospital when she was an inmate. He denied any more than that and said he was drinking a beer with his dad at a Bar near Wyandot Street in Lancaster and went out to get some tobacco from his truck and saw her walking down the street. He said they exchanged words and he greeted her and went back to bar with his dad. He denied going to her house or any further relationship. We then explained to him the importance of telling the truth and being responsible for his actions and he then decided to tell a different story.

James Hughes Continued

James stated recently he received a phone call in booking from Christopher Palmer whom said he had someone on the phone that wanted to talk to him. He then heard Karlee Cumbo on the phone talking to him. She stated she had some things she wanted to talk to him about and gave him her number and wanted him to call her. He then called her that evening and she was concerned her friends were all addicts and wanted to talk to him. He made arrangements to meet her at her brother's home on Wyandot St in Lancaster Oh. He said he went to the house and was setting on the couch talking to her when Chris Palmer walked through the house and said something to her and she got mad so they both left and they drove to a CVS pharmacy for her to get some cigarettes.

James stated Karlee and him returned to the home for a short time and just talked about her addiction and the problems and then he left. James said Karlee got a text from Christopher Palmer saying "Hey don't worry I won't tell anybody Hughes is hanging with you." He stated he has talked and texted Karlee a couple times since they met. Deputy Hughes said he knew Karlee Cumbo has a felony record and admits he made a big mistake and is remorseful for this. A taped statement was taken.

FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Allegation 1

Deputy Hughes admits he engaged in a relationship with a former inmate from the Fairfield County Jail. (sustained)

Allegation 2

Deputy Hughes made a statement threatening Chris Palmer a witness at the residence where Hughes was at during the incident. (not sustained)

Allegation 3

Deputy Hughes provided contra band to the Fairfield County Jail while working. (unfounded)

Allegation 4

Deputy Hughes violated the standard operating procedures of the Fairfield County Jail policies and procedures. (sustained)

Conclusion

The policy and procedures of the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office clearly spell out what conduct each employee should adhere to as an employee. They must govern their actions and conduct in accordance with these procedures. In this investigation it is clear Deputy Hughes admission even after his initial denial he violated several sections of code of Ethics S.O.P.2.01 These violations weaken the safety and security of facility. Investigative packet forwarded for review to Sheriff Phalen.

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

Dave Phalen, Sheriff

Professional Standards Division

TRANSCRIPT OF STATEMENT

Okay today is September 11, 2012 the time is approximately 11:00 a.m. present for this interview is myself Lt. Tim Voris and Christopher Palmer and Lt. Marc Churchill. Christopher would you state your full name and spell your last name?

Palmer Christopher L. Palmer, P-A-L-M-E-R.

Voris And what is your current address and telephone number sir?

Palmer 592 Crystal Lane, it's 740-407-6253.

Voris Are you aware that we're tape-recording this conversation?

Palmer Yes sir.

Voris And do you have any objections to that?

Palmer No.

Voris Alright this is in regards to an investigation uh complaint um Chris um tell me a little bit about what uh your relationship is with an individual who is a current deputy with the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office named uh James Hughes.

Palmer Um we seen each other in passing I you know I mean acquaintances I would never call us friends I mean we've seen each other we've never hung out or anything like that. Um most of the time I saw him at the jail when I was incarcerated but outside of that I've seen him um a couple times over at a mutual friend of ours house.

Voris Okay. You are friends with uh Kelly Cumbo?

Palmer	Correct.
Voris	And Kelly's sister is Carrie is that correct?

Palmer	Karlee Cumbo.
Voris	Karlee, okay. Tell me about information that you know while Karlee was incarcerated in the Fairfield County Jail what happened at the uh hospital?
Palmer	Um from what I've gathered she had surgery on her foot during the time that she had surgery on her foot she was at ...she was uh held at the hospital; during that time um Deputy James Hughes came out there and tried to work as much over-time as possible "quote unquote" so they could be alone to spend alone time together. Um also there was, I was told that there was reference made that if she needed anything to take back into the jail with her to let him know.
Voris	And what things would...uh you referring to?
Palmer	I would presume to say that they were cigarettes.
Voris	And um did Karlee tell you or Carrie....
Palmer	Karlee.
Voris	Karlee tell you that she'd received cigarettes before from Deputy Hughes?
Palmer	She said that there was cigarettes in the dorm that came from Hughes um she declined the cigarettes out at the hospital.
Voris	When do you think this relationship began between Deputy Hughes and Carrie?
Palmer	From what I'm gathering it started while she was incarcerated.
Voris	And do you know about what month that was?
Palmer	I would say probably late July.

Voris

Okay tell me about an incident that happened at uh the Cumbo residence the other day which was September 10th is that correct?

Palmer

Correct. Um I Kelly and I was returning from an AA meeting, we walked in um James and Karlee are sitting on the couch all cuddled up together um they jumped up and they're like why the F did you bring him here and Kelly said it's because it's my house and they said well we're leaving um why he was walking out the door he made several open ended threats towards me about me keeping my mouth shut, if anybody found out he would make sure something happened to me. Um they left for approximately I would say two hours. Um they returned after that they came back to the house um we walked in one time had presumed that they were on the couch laying together watching a movie um and then Kelly and I returned approximately about 1:30-2:00 in the morning and they were having sex on the couch.

Voris

Okay um how long do you think that this relationship has been going on?

Palmer

I would say probably since late July.

Voris

And since late July was there discussions about the use of Oxycotton, heroin, Percocet's things like that uh that you are aware of that uh Deputy Hughes made comments about

Palmer

He made a comment to Kelly Cumbo that it was all right to us Opiates as a recreational drug but not a, not to be addicted to them. Um he made a comment that he does Perc 30's and just basically that you know it's okay to use them just not to be addicted to them.

Voris

Deputy Hughes or James Hughes indicated that he uses Percocet 30's?

Palmer

Correct.

Voris

Have you ever seen him take Percocet 30 or any other controlled substance, drugs or alcohol?

Palmer	I saw him, he was drinking last night but I've never seen him take any illegal substance.
Voris	How old is Karlee?
Palmer	She is I believe in her early 20's.
Voris	And is she uh 21?
Palmer	Correct.
Voris	And is she on probation?
Palmer	Correct.
Voris	Who's she on probation with that you know of?
Palmer	Um a misdemeanor and a felony probation officer.
Voris	Are you on probation yourself?
Palmer	Correct.
Voris	Who's your probation officer?
Palmer	Matt Shine.
Voris	What are the rules as being on probation?
Palmer	Um no consumption of illegal drugs, alcohol total sobriety.
Voris	Did you see Karlee drinking alcohol?
Palmer	No she was actually drinking Mt. Dew.
Voris	Okay but the deputy that was there was drinking alcohol?
Palmer	He was drinking Bud-light out of a plastic bottle.
Voris	Okay um anything else you'd like to share with us?
Palmer	No sir.

Voris

Lt. Churchill.

Churchill	You indicated that you observed um Deputy Hughes and the female having sex, can you tell us the date that you observed this?
Palmer	Last night at um it'd been September 11 th at approximately 1:30 a.m.
Churchill	Okay and you said you observed them earlier in the day on September 10 th on the couch?
Palmer	Correct.
Churchill	They left the residence and while leaving the residence he made the, the open ended threat uh what you perceived was towards you?
Palmer	Correct.
Churchill	And then you left the residence soon after that?
Palmer	Correct Kelly and I we went to Kroger's to get stuff for his wife.
Churchill	And then at some point in time while you were gone they had returned to the residence.
Palmer	No I actually had returned I went to the neighbor's house which I'm friend's with him because I didn't want to be over there with a threat being made so I just separated myself from the situation because I am on probation and I don't want any kind of conflict or anything that would violate my probation. So I left and went next door and when uh we saw them come back we stayed next door and that's when you know Kelly and I walked next door and observed them having uh sex on the couch.
Churchill	And what did he say when you caught him, Deputy Hughes, and the female subject engaging in intercourse on the couch?

Palmer He didn't say nothing to me I don't believe that he was aware that I was standing there cause I walked in the door and immediately turned around and walked right back out the door.

Churchill So you don't believe they, they, either of them observed you?

Palmer Ut uh, no.

Voris Previously you had indicated that you felt that he was providing money for her for sex is that correct?

Palmer Correct.

Voris Will you tell me a little bit about that?

Palmer Um she said that she was supposed to pick up a hundred dollars from him and he wanted her to come up to Columbus and go to a bar and pick up the money from him and she said no she was not going to go into a bar. He said well you'll be in Franklin County you'll be all right, she said no she said cause then I'm going to have to drive home and he said no you can just stay here with me and she said no when I'm done I want to go home. And I asked her what that was about and she said it was none of my business.

Voris And this is what she told you?

Palmer Correct.

Voris Okay. Is everything you told us in this statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge?

Palmer Yes sir.

Voris All right we don't have any more questions for Christopher Palmer at this time the interview will conclude; the time is 11:09 the same at the start are the same at the conclusion. This concludes the interview.

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

Dave Phalen, Sheriff

Investigative Division

TRANSCRIPT OF STATEMENT

Today's September 12, 2012 and uh currently I am at 3690 Logan-Thornville Road. Present for this interview is Karli Cumbo and myself Lieutenant Tim Voris.

Voris Karli would state your full name and spell your last name?

Cumbo Karli Marie Cumbo, Cumbo : C-U-M-B-O.

Voris And your age and date of birth please.

Cumbo I'm 26 and 8/30/86.

Voris Ok, and are you aware that I'm tape recording this conversation?

Cumbo Yes.

Voris Do you have any objections to that?

Cumbo No.

Voris Ok, Karli uh, I'm investigating a complaint that was filed with the Sheriff's Office , uh can you give a little bit of information about your relationship with James Hughes please?

Cumbo Uh, well I met him while I was incarcerated I guess I had surgery on my foot, while I was in the hospital and he was there with me uh three nights while I was at the hospital we just talked a lot and I don't know I guess gained a mutual respect for each other. I don't know I, I'd consider not really a friend but a friend I don't know really how to explain it.

Voris Give me some ideas of some of the things you talked about or discussed.

Cumbo Jail and my kids, his kids, uh staying clean, meetings, my sobriety how important it is just things like that.

Voris Ok. Uh, so what happened after you were at the hospital?

Cumbo Well I didn't see him again uh like the entire time I was in jail until I got out, I went to go visit a friend and he was working, I gave him my phone number and told him if he wanted to hang out to call me, so. And then he, he did call and we ended up hanging out for like an hour, hour and half on Monday.

Voris And where was this at?

Cumbo My brother's house, uh which is on Wyandotte Street, 329 Wyandotte.

Voris What's your brother's name?

Cumbo Kelly Cumbo.

Voris Ok. Uh, what were you serving time in the County Jail for?

Cumbo Possession of Heroin.

Voris And that was from Officer's that arrested you in July?

Cumbo Yes.

Voris Ok. Uh, while at uh Chris's uh or while at your brother's Kelly's house...

Cumbo Um hum.

Voris ...uh was there an individual there named Chris uh Palmer?

Cumbo Yeah. He, he wasn't there at first and then he showed up back with my brother when he came home from the store, carried groceries in.

Voris Does James Hughes know uh, uh, Christopher Palmer?

Cumbo I don't know if they know each other like I don't know if they know each other from jail or I don't know. I don't, I'm sure that they probably do, Chris was in jail also, so.

Voris Did James Hughes make his statement to you anything about "that Motherfucker ought to keep his mouth shut or he's gonna be in big

trouble”.

Cumbo No he didn’t, not at all.

Voris Did he make any statements with, with the fact that made you feel that he was being uh or going to threaten him if he said anything?

Cumbo No he didn’t even say anything about Chris so.

Voris Uh, has your communication between James and you been through texting?

Cumbo No, through like a phone, phone conversations so maybe one, one text which was me sending him my brothers address but other than that no.

Voris Ok, and or where was he at when he received that text?

Cumbo On his way to come see me.

Voris Um, when you go down to the MSMJ to see visit other inmates who are you visiting?

Cumbo Um, Brittany Star, is who I normally visit or Jessica Cantrell they’re I grew up with both of them, known them my whole life.

Voris Ok, uh while in the uh County Jail uh did you get anything uh given to you by Deputy Hughes or any Deputy of the Sheriff’s Office such as contraband of cigarettes or anything that you shouldn’t have?

Cumbo No. Now actually uh in our dorm one night we got caught smoking and Hughes was the one that came in to get our tobacco from us so, no defiantly didn’t get anything.

Voris Ok. Uh, is everything in this statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge?

Cumbo Yes.

Voris Is there anything else you’d like to add to this statement?

Cumbo Uh, just that I want there; I want them to know in this recording that nothing was sexual between us and you’d ask me questions about that and it defiantly wasn’t at all (inaud), so.

Voris Your relationship as you called it uh as a friendship.

Cumbo Correct.

Voris Ok. Ok, well this will conclude the interview with Karli Cumbo. And
the time is uh shortly after 5:10 PM. Thank you.

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office
Dave Phalen, Sheriff
Investigative Division

TRANSCRIPT OF STATEMENT

Alright today's the September 12th, it is 6:49 PM according to my watch. Present for this interview is James Hughes, myself Lieutenant Tim Voris, and Lieutenant Marc Churchill.

Voris James would you state your full name and spell your last name?

Hughes James Donald Hughes Junior: H-U-G-H-E-S.

Voris And you are a current at the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office?

Hughes Yes sir.

Voris How long have you been employed?

Hughes Since April 21, 2012.

Voris Ok, and you're currently assigned to the Jail?

Hughes Yes sir.

Voris Ok. While working at the Jail, uh tell me about an occurrence that happened while working uh the other day, you got a phone call from uh from uh someone from the outside.

Hughes I got a phone call from (inaud) by the name of uh Chris Palmer who stated that I was just the guy that he wanted to talk to and that he had someone who wanted to talk to me.

Voris Ok.

Hughes I said "ok", he handed the phone off to a female said she was Karli Cumbo which is an inmate I had done duty, uh guarded out at the hospital.

Voris Ok, and while you were working at the hospital did you develop a

relationship as far as you guys became friends and taking about family or things?

Hughes I wouldn't call it friends, it more of acquaintances, I, I, we, we ha—we just talked and you know I was there for twelve hours one day and eight hours the next day and (inaud) just talked.

Voris Ok. So she's at the hospital and you're providing security to her?

Hughes Um hum, yes sir.

Voris Ok. And then what happens after that? She goes back to the MSMJ?

Hughes Yeah, she goes back to Jail and.

Voris And did she give you a phone number at the hospital?

Hughes No, not at the hospital.

Voris Ok, tell me what happened then?

Hughes After Palmer called?

Voris Yes.

Hughes Palmer called and said he had someone that wanted to talk to me and it was her and she said she told me she had some things that she wanted to talk about and she gave me her number and told me to give her a call.

Voris Ok, and uh did you give her a call?

Hughes Yes sir.

Voris And tell me about when you gave her a call.

Hughes I just gave her a call, she stated that there was some issues that she wanted to talk about and she'd like a positive person to talk to about these issues and she seemed concern that all her friends were all recovering Heroin addicts and she really had no one to talk to.

Voris When did you call her back?

Hughes Uh, that night when I got off work.

Voirs Ok, and then did you guys decide to uh, to meet later on or did she meet you that night?

Hughes She didn't meet me that night, I was going home and I decided to uh meet later on.

Voris Ok, so when did you meet her?

Hughes Uh, it was Monday.

Voris And at what time?

Hughes Probably around 9:30, 9:00, 9:30 at night. I believe that was what it was.

Voris And where was this at?

Hughes It was at a house on Wyandotte.

Voris Does she live there?

Hughes She said she lived there sometimes and lives at her Mom sometimes.

Voris Tell me what happened there.

Hughes Uh, we's sitting in the back room, the sunroom and just sitting on the couch talking to her and that's when Palmer came through....

Voris Walked through the house?

Hughes ...he walked through the back sunroom into the house.

Voris Ok.

Hughes Uh and she seem aggravated that he walked by I guess, she said something to him but I didn't hear her. She stood up and said you want to go somewhere real quick and I said I guess and just got in the car and drove around and she ended up going to a CVS buying cigarettes and uh then we drove back and went back into the sunroom for just a little while and then I left and went home.

Voris Ok. What did you talk about? What was so important for her to talk to you about?

Hughes She just wanted to talk, she was talking about staying clean and meeting

and what she, what her plans were to do to stay clean and the concern for her being clean to raise her child and stuff of that nature.

Voris Ok, uh talked to her since then?

Hughes Yeah.

Voris How often?

Hughes Uh, she'll text me sometimes and not very often, it's not you know.

Voris A couple of times? Two or three times a day?

Hughes Two or three times, not a day, maybe two or three times total, maybe twice one day I'd say.

Voris Did you talk to her today?

Hughes Yeah, I talked to her today.

Voris Tell me what that conversation was about?

Hughes She said that she was at her brother's house and that her brother had made her leave because himself and uh Pal---or Chris Palmer were gonna have girls to come over there.

Voris Ok. What type of record does she have?

Hughes My, I know from working at the Jail that she's got felonies on her record.

Voris Do you know what for?

Hughes Drug charges.

Voris Ok. What about uh Chris, uh Chris Palmer?

Hughes All I know about his is that he was an inmate here, I'm not real familiar with him. I never had a whole lot of contact with him, personal dealing with hm.

Voris How about Kelly Combo?

Hughes I know that's her brother, I know he's been arrested before but I don't

know for what.

Voris Ok. So after you uh go over to her house and you park, where did you park your car at?

Hughes In front of her house.

Voris Ok. Did uh a text get sent to Karli from Christopher....

Hughes Yeah, yeah it did.

Voris ...uh Palmer? Tell me about that.

Hughes She said, she read off a text that she got from Palmer that said "hey, tell Hughes don't worry I won't tell anyone that he's here or he's hanging out with you".

Voris Meaning that what?

Hughes Meaning that I, he prob---he knew I would probably be in trouble if you know if anyone knew I was hanging around her.

Voris What did you think when you got that, heard that?

Hughes What did I think?

Voris Yeah.

Hughes It dawned on me that oh yeah I'm probably in violation of rules and I, I just, I thought oh hell, I guess.

Voris Ok.

Hughes Excuse my language.

Voris Alright, uh did you get a copy of your Policies and Procedures Manual when you began here?

Hughes Yes sir I did.

Voris Do you understand those?

Hughes Yes sir I do.

Voris Ok. Lieutenant do you have any questions?

Churchill No.

Voris Uh, Anything uh James you would like to uh add to this statement?

Hughes I know I made a mistake, uh if given a chance to stay employed at the Sheriff's Office, I will defiantly make more wise, wiser decisions. Uh, I'm not someone that gets in trouble, I'm not someone that goes out and does stupid things, uh both of the Police Departments I worked at before, I have no discipline for anything and I was out on Patrol making split second decisions and I never made a decision that came back to haunt me, I've never got myself hurt or anybody else hurt with the decisions I've made.

Voris Ok.

Hughes Uh, I was just.

Voris Have you talked to any other inmates outside of the Sheriff's Office besides her?

Hughes Other?

Voris And Chris Palmer?

Hughes No, not at all.

Voris Any of them you called upon the phone and just talked to about something going on or met with them for a beer or anything like that?

Hughes No sir, never.

Voris This is the first time?

Hughes First time sir.

Voris Ok.

Hughes Last time too.

Voris Ok. Alright, this will conclude our interview with James Hughes. The time is 6:58 PM. The same at the start are the same at the conclusion. This will conclude the interview.